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Navy & Marine Corps Medical News (MEDNEWS)
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This service distributes news and information to Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees, and retired Navy and Marine Corps families. Further dissemination of this e-mail is encouraged.

Headlines this week include:

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Headline: Navy Doctor Saves Life in Mid-Air

Over the Pacific Ocean--A routine commercial flight from Honolulu to Japan became anything but recently, yet it had a happy ending thanks to a Navy doctor.

LT Oren G. Townsend, MC, an internal medicine specialist at U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Okinawa, was returning home aboard Northwest Flight 75, when a stewardess requested a "medical attendant's" help.

Townsend found himself saving the life of a Japanese citizen, Mr. Yanagasaki, who was experiencing uncontrollable coughing fits due to asthma. Despite the use of an inhaler, Yanagasaki's condition became progressively worse.

At the recommendation of Townsend to get the patient immediate medical attention, the airplane's captain changed course for the nearest hospital. Unfortunately, that was in Guam, nearly three hours away.

Yanagasaki's condition was fading fast. "I had to do something, anything, to steady the patient's breathing, or I was going to lose him," said Townsend. "All my medical supplies were in the airplane's baggage compartment. The only equipment I had was the plane's emergency medical kit."

Fortunately, the scanty medical kit contained epinephrine. Townsend administered the epinephrine in small

doses, every 30 minutes, to relax the patient's spasming muscles to allow more air into the lungs.

Upon arrival in Guam, an ambulance crew quickly ushered Yanagasaki off the plane. En route to the hospital Yanagasaki stopped breathing but through the use of a ventilator his breathing was resumed.

A few weeks after returning to Okinawa, Yanagasaki called Townsend to express his sincere appreciation. "The only reward I needed was to know Yanagasaki was well and I'm glad he made it," said Townsend. "I'm glad someone was there to help him."

By PFC Eric Sirmans, USMC, Okinawa, Japan

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Headline: Revamped Clinic Improves Care to Fleet Sailors

Norfolk, VA--The Norfolk Naval Shipyard Medical Clinic reopened its doors recently after receiving a \$3.2 million, 18 month long facelift.

The clinic was torn down to its deckplates, leaving only the walls and the foundation, and rebuilt to provide expanded care to the active duty sailors working at or near the shipyard, including the Sailors of Destroyer Squadrons 18 and 28, whose ships recently relocated there.

Besides expanding its capability, the new clinic is also exceptionally convenient. It's now only a short walk for Destroyer Squadron Sailors to get health care.

"I have found the new clinic to be very effective for the DESRON (Destroyer Squadron)," said CAPT Ron Peterman, commander of Destroyer Squadron 18. "We have just deployed two ships that were 98 percent medical and dental ready. This is phenomenal considering a lot of ships deploy at 60 to 70 percent."

The clinic has dedicated 12 appointments a day for squadron Sailors. While Independent Duty Corpsmen (IDC) continue to hold sick call on their ships, they now have a second option available to them -- the "Fleet Sickcall Room."

"The space is available if the IDC can't use their spaces on the ship due to renovations, or just need the extra room. It's there for their convenience," said HM1 Jonathan M. Tower, facilities manager at the clinic.

The clinic can see up to 400 Destroyer Squadron Sailors per month, providing physicals, hearing tests, X-rays, optometry care, and lab tests.

According to HM2 Paul D. Loomis, leading petty officer for medicine at the clinic, the new facility and expanded service does more than provide good health care.

"(It) also helps the morale of the troops," he said, "and it sends a message to the fleet that we're here to serve them."

By HN Bridget D. Gayner, Naval Hospital Portsmouth, VA

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Headline: Courageous Corpsmen Help Rescue Marines

Camp Lejeune, NC--Three corpsmen were presented the Navy and Marine Corps Medal by LT GEN Charles E. Wilhelm, Commander, U.S. Marine Forces, Atlantic at a Camp Lejeune ceremony recently.

The corpsmen, HM3 Jonnie L. Gilpen Jr., HN Jose Gonzales and HM2 Frank Bowersox IV, received the highest peacetime award for heroism for their actions in the wake of the May 10, 1996 collision of a CH-46 Sea Knight and AH-1W Super Cobra. Fourteen men were killed in the crash, but the CH-46 pilots survived, thanks largely to the efforts of the three corpsmen.

"As Marines, we carry out a dangerous mission. It's dangerous whether we're performing it in time of peace or war," Wilhelm said. "Accidents happen, we respond to them, we honor our dead, and we recognize our heroes. Today, we recognize our heroes."

Wilhelm went on to describe how the wreckage rested in chest-high swamps deep in a wooded and inaccessible area of Camp Lejeune. When the corpsmen arrived, they searched through jagged metal and spilled aviation fuel with the dark hopes of finding survivors. There, they found CAPT Walter W. Kulakowski, leaning against the remains of his CH-46, suffering from a broken ankle, leg and wrist.

"It only took them a matter of minutes, but it seemed like hours before I saw anyone," said Kulakowski. "It was so good to see them. I told them MAJ Johnson (the CH-46 pilot) was trapped in the helicopter, but they were already finding their way into the wreckage."

The trio braved intense heat and smoke to pull the severely injured and unconscious Johnson from the burning wreckage. When a fire erupted as they were stabilizing the pilot, the corpsmen unhesitatingly placed themselves between the fire and Johnson, shielding him from further harm.

"I don't know how to put into words how I feel about these men," Johnson said at the ceremony. "They deserve these medals and so much more."

By SGT Lance Bacon, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune

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Headline: 'Green Side' Corpsman Keeps Marines Healthy

Twentynine Palms, CA--When it comes time for Marines at Twentynine Palms, CA to get their marksman requalification, they make their way to the Marksmanship Training Unit (MTU).

There, Marines meet the visible reminders of the function of the MTU: armorers, who issue and maintain the weapons; range safety officers, who ensure the safety of the marksmen and staff, and the line coaches, who coach and assist.

There's one key person, however, that Marines hope never to see on the range because it means there's been an accident. That's the MTU's corpsman, one of the most important in the unit.

"I'm the first emergency medical technician on the scene in case someone gets hurt," said HM3 Zachary

Gillispie. "I requested to come (to the MTU) because I like serving with Marines."

Since his arrival, Gillispie has worked to improve the unit's medical readiness. He's initiated a medical training program and is the liaison between the MTU and the 23rd Dental Company at Twentynine Palms.

"One of the requirements for battalions is for Marines to get one hour of medical training a month," said Gillispie. "So far, I've given classes in basic first aid, control of bleeding, treatment for shock, transportation of injured, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV awareness."

When he's not teaching classes, Gillispie is handling minor sick calls and scheduling dental clinic appointments for his Marines. While he doesn't dispense medications, he's hoping his request to do so will be approved to help save time for the MTU Marines.

"I try to do as much as I can from here," Gillispie said. "The schedules of the MTU Marines are unpredictable sometimes and they can't always make appointments. And if you to send someone to sick call for medicine, you're looking at a two-hour trip (to the clinic and pharmacy) there and back."

Going the extra mile for the MTU is something Gillispie says is part of his job. The effects don't go unnoticed by the MTU Marines, who call him "Devil Doc."

"I like working with the Marines because I enjoy the camaraderie they have," Gillispie said. "The 'green side' is the best kept secret in the Navy. If I have my way I'll stay on this side."

By CPL C. J. Young, Twentynine Palms, CA

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Headline: Got a Health Question? An Answer's A Phone Call Away

Cherry Point, NC--Three-year-old Timmy's got a cough that won't let up. The mole on your chin has gotten darker and larger in the last month. Eight-month-old Sarah's been crying for two hours straight.

Should you go to the doctor? Should you wait a while to see if it clears up? Who can you call to get medical advice about these problems?

If you're an active duty military member, retiree or family member living in the Naval Hospital (NH) Halyburton, NC, area, you can call Carol Lockhart.

Lockhart, a registered nurse, is the hospital's telephone "advice nurse". Six hours a day, Monday through Friday, she's available to answer health questions. She's answered questions on everything from home treatments for cold and flu symptoms to how to eat right to where to go in the hospital to have that mole checked.

"My purpose isn't to replace a doctor's care," said Lockhart. "I'm here to provide advice -- and lots of times my advice is, 'let me help you make an appointment with a doctor.'"

On the other hand, Lockhart can sometimes save her callers trips to the hospital. She estimates that in November, the first month the advice nurse was operating, she saved people about 85 trips to Halyburton.

A lot of Lockhart's job is, in her words, to be "a mom."

"I get a call from a new mother, her husband's deployed, and her mom's across the country. So she calls me for the advice she might call her mom for," said Lockhart. "I feel like the mom of Cherry Point."

Lockhart said that her clientele at first was predominately young people, but she's starting to get more calls from the retired community.

While the availability of an advice nurse is new to the Cherry Point area, some parts of the country have had an advice nurse available to them for some time as a benefit of TRICARE. Many TRICARE regions have a registered nurse available 24 hours a day to answer questions. When TRICARE comes to Halyburton, Lockhart will move to a new job, probably at the hospital's family practice clinic.

In the meantime, she's ready to provide more motherly advice to Cherry Point's families.

By CDR Morgan Smith, Naval Hospital Halyburton and Jan Davis, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Headline: Telemedicine Aids PRINCETON Corpsman in Treating Ship Master

Off the Coast of Baha, CA--USS PRINCETON (CG 59) used speed, medical expertise, and telemedicine to help save a 66-year-old master of a Greek freighter recently.

In the early morning of Feb. 10, PRINCETON received word from the U.S. Coast Guard that the master of the Greek bulk cargo vessel Phaethon was in medical distress with severe abdominal pains and cramping. PRINCETON immediately proceeded to rendezvous with the Phaethon, launching its helicopter to pick up the master and transport him back to the cruiser once the two ships were within 150 miles of each other.

PRINCETON's corpsman, HMCS Daniel Shepherd, provided immediate care and arranged for a telemedicine hookup with Naval Medical Center San Diego for expert advise. Via the video link, LCDR Bruce Meneley, MC, was able to diagnose the patient as having a blocked urinary tract.

Overnight, PRINCETON steamed back toward land and in the morning of Feb. 11 flew the patient to La Paz, Mexico where he received further treatment.

By JO2 Robert Garnand, Commander Naval Surface Force Pacific

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Headline: TRICARE Question and Answer

Question: I'm enrolled in TRICARE Prime and my Primary Care Manager (PCM) recommended that I take a Health Risk Assessment (HRA). What's that? What is it used for?

Answer: A HRA is a self-administered questionnaire that surveys many lifestyles and diet factors that will be reviewed and discussed with you by your primary care provider. The purpose of the HRA is to help you find ways that will fit into your lifestyle to help you lead a healthier, longer life. Some of the factors examined include: alcohol and tobacco use, stress management, diet, blood pressure monitoring, safety practices, exercise, and HIV awareness.

Your PCM can steer you to programs that will help you improve in areas in which you may be weak.

For more information, contact your TRICARE PCM or the Health Promotion Office at your Military Treatment Facility near you.

Additional information on TRICARE is available on the Department of Defense (Health Affairs) Homepage on the World Wide Web. The address is <http://www.ha.osd.mil>.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Vegetables Provide Powerful Medicine

What food group can reduce your risk of cancer by 30 percent, protect against heart disease and colds, have antibacterial capabilities, and are low in calories and high in fiber? These superstar foods are vegetables!

Check out the super powers of these vegetables.

Spinach, made popular by the cartoon character Popeye, is one of the many leafy green vegetables that have super powers. It is a healthy source of iron and beta carotene. Beta carotene acts as a disabler of a potential number of cancer causing substances, and is a rich source of vitamin K, which is essential for blood clotting. It also contains vitamin D, magnesium, boron and calcium, all of which are essential for building strong bones.

Broccoli is another powerful leafy green superstar. In addition to being an excellent source of beta carotene, broccoli is a great source of vitamin C, calcium and fiber.

The potato achieves superstar status when it is unadorned. A modest potato has zero fat, lots of fiber, complex carbohydrates and vitamin C. And be sure to eat the skin, as most of the potato's nutrients are found there.

Aside from their powerful aroma, onions and garlic, are considered powerful vegetables. Onions contain organosulfides, which are the substances that give them their taste and smell. Researchers at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX, suggest that organosulfides appear to prevent the body from turning chemicals in the liver into toxic substances.

Garlic is one of the heart's favorite vegetables because of its properties that improve blood clotting and circulation. It lowers blood pressure in people that suffer from hypertension. Garlic also has qualities to defend the body against colds and flu.

According to Registered Dietitian LT Kristen Moe, MSC, at Naval Hospital Charleston, SC, "Vegetables slow down or

reverse many of the steps that result in cancer. It is important to note that research is leaning toward the benefits of eating whole fruits and vegetables rather than taking vitamin and mineral supplements."

By Kimberly Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

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Note: March is National Nutrition Month, dedicated to encouraging consumers to eat a balanced and healthful eating style.

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Feedback and comments are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact Jan Davis, MEDNEWS editor, at e-mail address mednews@bms200.med.navy.mil, telephone 202/762-3223 (DSN 762-3223), or fax 202/762-3224.